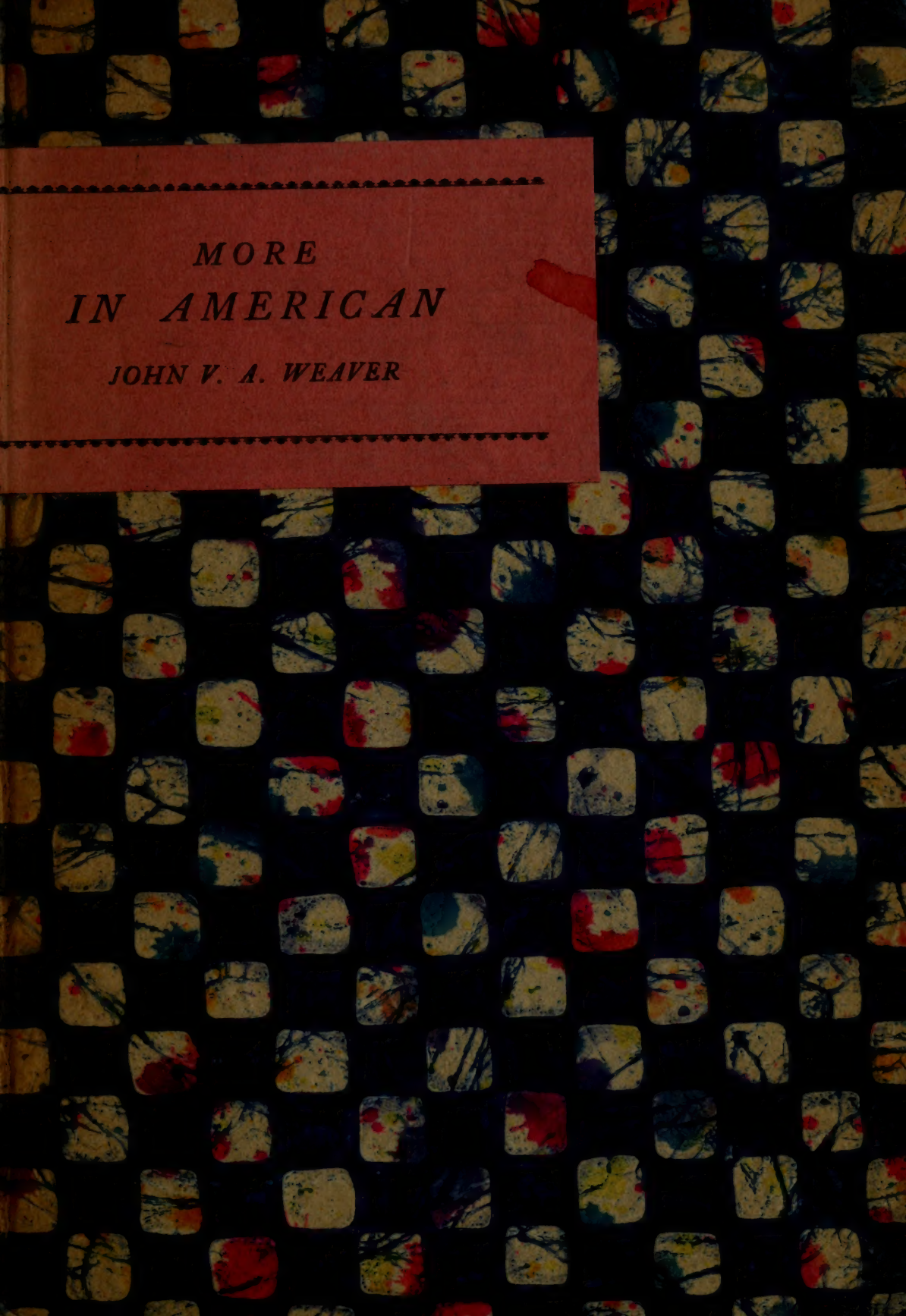
MORE
IN AMERICAN
JOHN V. A. WEAVER

More "In American"

BOOKS BY
JOHN V. A. WEAVER

FINDERS
IN AMERICAN
MORE "IN AMERICAN"
MARGEY WINS THE GAME

More "In American"

Poems by John V. A. Weaver

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To Margaret Wood Weaver.

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More "In American"

Leaners

So Pa yells out, "Why ain't the dinner done yet?"
And Ma says, "They was a fire down the block,
And fourteen fire-engines. It was excitin'!"
And Pa yells louder, "Oh, for the love of God!
Ain't you got nothin' to do but be a leaner?
That's what the whole bunch of you are—just
leaners."
He said a whole lot more, and so did Ma.
He's always naggin' her about bein' a leaner.

But Ma and me don't care. In the afternoons
We get a pillow apiece, and rest it down
On the window, and Ma puts her arm around me,
And we can see everything, like a reg'lar movie.
The L trains whizzin' by, chuck full of people,
And I wave, and they wave back to me again.
And the day the dog bit Frankie, across the street
I seen it, and it was awful. And Mr. Blake
Come along another time and hit Miz Blake,
And fell down in a mud-puddle. And the scissors-
man

Comes by, and the rags-a-lion, and the grind-
organ,
And a wop funeral, with a great big band;
And Ma says, "Did you see Miz Glibbick, Edna?
She's havin' chicken tonight. Look in the
basket."
And one time when I got the pillow fixed,
There was that stuck-up Johnny Wade, that's only
Just fifteen, and he thinks he's awful smart
Because he got long pants. And there he was
Right underneath the window, with that girl
That just moved in at the corner. And he kissed
her,
And I told Ma, and I ran and got a glass
Of water, and threw it on 'em. And was he mad!
And yestiddy, a poor old horse fell down,
And it took all afternoon to get him up—

What do we care if Pa does call us "leaners?"

The Foolish Plant

One day Ma come home
  And says, "Look what I got!"
And it was a little plant
  In a round pot.
Then she put it in the window
  And says, "Watch it grow.
It'll have a pretty flower
  First thing you know."

So all the time, weeks and weeks
  I kept waterin' it.
The wall next door was very high.
  It hardly got a bit
Of sunshine. It was dark
  All day. And at night
I thought it was kept awake
  By the arc-light.

It wouldn't bloom; and it never
  Growed worth a cent.

I think it was a silly plant,
  Because it got all bent
Stretchin' towards that arc-light
  Like it was tied. . . .
When I told her what I thought,
  Ma cried.

When I'm All Through

When I'm all through, and you got to get rid of
me,
Don't go shootin' the bunk, or makin' prayers,
And all that stuff. And don't go stickin' me
Into no stuffy cemetery lot.
I want some room . . . I got to have room . . .
I got to!

So if you really want to take the trouble,
You take what's left, and put it in a fire,
The hottest you can find—and let 'er burn!
Till I ain't only a handful of grey somethin'.
"Ashes to ashes"—ain't that a whole lot cleaner
Than "dust to dust"? You let old fire have me.

Then you just cut them ashes in four parts.
Take the first ashes to the side of a mountain,
Heave 'em up to the wind . . . I used to love
The way it's quiet and strong and big up there.

The second ashes, take 'em down to the ocean;
And when the waves come pilin' up the beach,

Scatter 'em where the green starts to get foamy.
They used to sing me songs about havin' nerve,
And never gettin' tired, or givin' in—
Let 'em run, and take me with 'em.

And the third part, you go out to the country,
Into some wide, long field, and spread 'em round.
Maybe they'll help the grass to climb a little.
I can remember how I used to roll,
And dig my face down in, and sniff and bite it,
And lay back on it, just a crazy kid,
And watch the clouds go skippin' over the sky,
And the bees, and the crazy birds, and everything
Would get so perfect I would want to cry.

Then they'll be one part left. You take that down
Where's they's the thickest crowds, right in the city.
And when nobody's lookin', give it a sling
Onto the sidewalk, underneath their feet.
The pore things, always hoofin' it along,
Somewheres, they don't know where, and I don't either.
Always lookin' for somethin'—wonder what?
I never got very near 'em. A person can't,
Even when you want to. Everybody's scared,

So scared, you know . . . so scared! But a
bunch of ashes
Maybe might get real close to somebody once.

Just once. . . .

Circus

"Well, boys, how would you like to go to the
circus?"
Say, maybe Ern and me didn't jump up!
I'm goin' on ten, and Ern is most eleven,
And neither of us hadn't saw a circus.

"Yessir, it's Treeman's great big three ring circus,
Lions, and taggers, and elephants, and all.
I got a couple tickets for two smart boys."
Ern drops his fishin' pole. "Oh, gee," he says,
What do we have to do?" The little man
Gets down outa the buggy and blinks through his
glasses.
"Well, now, you see, this circus changed the route;
They're comin' to your town, and here I got
A lot of posters yet that ain't been posted.
Now what I want, you tell me where to find
The man that owns that barn." I looks around.
"What barn?" I says. "Why, that there one,"
he says.

And then he points his finger at the schoolhouse!
Say, maybe he was only tryin' to fool us,
Or maybe his eyes was reely awful bad.
Or else he didn't care, so long as he
Could get his posters up, and blame somebody.
At any rate, I starts to say, "That ain't—"
But like a flash, Ern kicks me in the shin,
And says, "That barn? What that barn ain't
nobody's.
You can put all the posters there you want to."
The man, he looks at Ern a couple seconds,
And then says, "Fine!" and starts goin' over to it.

Then Ern, he whispers to me, "Don't be silly!
It's such a grand big joke on that old Mears!
The darn old meanie, tellin' Pa about
Us gettin' F, in deportment. And besides,
You don't think Pa would get us any tickets.
Come on and help! We got to see that circus!"

"But s'posen we get caught?" "Aw, don't be
silly!"
Says Ern, "He's just a blind old foolish thing!
Anybody that can't see it's a schoolhouse—
How's he ever goin' to tell that it was us?"

"Come on, here, boys," the poster-man was sayin',
"Come on and earn your tickets." So we went.

And gee, the way we stuck them posters up!
The animals, and a lady on a horse,
And a Loop-the-loop, with monkeys on bicycles,
And the grandest lot of things you ever saw!
In just a minute or so, the place was covered!

And then the man gave us our tickets, and left,
And we just rolled around the ground and laughed
About the joke that we was goin' to have,
And all about how mad old Mears would be!

So then, we went on home, but all the time,
I kept on worryin' about bein' caught
And what would happen then. But Ern just
laughed,
And says, "Of all the scaredy-cats! Oh, gee!"
But just the same, I didn't feel easy, nossir.

Nobody didn't seem to think of us.
They was an awful row about the posters,
And Mears was just so mad he couldn't spit,
And the circus people had a lot of trouble,
But they fixed that all right, and Thursday come,
And Friday, and tomorrow would be the circus,
And still nobody hadn't touched the posters;
And nobody hadn't ast us any questions.

It was too easy. Things don't go like that.

II

But anyways, Sa'ddy we done the chores,
And we was fixin' to slip off after dinner,
And Pa stopped all of a sudden talkin' to Ma
About tent-catapillas, and he says,
"Now, just a minute, boys!" and looks at us.
And doesn't say a word, just looks and frowns.
Oh, gee, I knowed that we was in for it!

Then Pa takes somethin' out of his back-pocket.
He opens his hand, and holds it under my eyes.
It was fishin'-line, but wrapped around some
paper.
Doggone it, what did I wrap that line around
A bible-card, with my name right on it, for?
"I guess you know who that belongs to, eh?
Old Mears, he picked that up off of the ground
Under the posters, early Wednesday mornin'.
That's all I have to say, ain't it?"

Gee whiz!
That's Pa all over. Deep, he is, and quiet.
Just think of knowin' all week long, and never
Lettin' us guess he knew a thing about it!

"All right," he says, "You march along with me.
I got a little circus that you're goin' to."
He wasn't smilin' any. He was mad.

We was too scared to ast a single question.
Pa kept us a couple yards in front of him,
And pretty soon we got down to the schoolhouse.
He sets down on the steps, and lights his pipe
And takes out a "Breeder's Gazette," and a little book
And then he looks at all the posters there,
And says to us, "Well, boys, it's purty, ain't it.
The joke that you boys had was mighty funny.
Now, I got to have my little joke, myself.
Get out your pocket-knives. You're goin' to tear
All of them posters off, and what won't tear
You're goin' to scrape. We don't leave here to-night
Till every inch is off. Get busy, now,
So I can start in laughin'."

Oh, Gee whiz!
It kept on gettin' hotter all afternoon,
And we just tore and scraped, and scraped and tore.
Pa kept his eye right on us. If we stopped
To catch a breath, he'd start in: "All right, Ern.
Get back to work. Here, Jack, get busy, there.
It's such a joke I wouldn't want that you
Should miss a bit." My back begun to ache,
And both my hands got cramped. But you know Pa—

Once he gets a notion into his head—
And all the time the circus was goin' on!
We just kept thinkin' about the other boys.
That would be laughin' and hollerin'. And us two,
That was too far away even to hear
The band, because the circus was way away
Over the other side of town, on the edge.
Not even hearin' the band! That might of helped.

When we got half of the pictures, maybe, off,
I just couldn't stand bein' tired another second.
I didn't care if Pa whaled me. I laid down,
And I guess maybe I did cry a little.
Then Pa looks up from his book, and says, "All right.
Ten minutes off for rest." So Ern come over,
And whispers, "Oh, gee, Jack, I'm awful sorry!"
What good did that do? Why, right that minute we knew
The lady would be hangin' by her teeth
From the center-pole. . . . And all the big old elephants
Would be paradin', and bicycles loopin' the loop!
That made me start in cryin' all over again.

Pa seen me, and he stands up, and he stretches.

"Time's up," he says. "Sorry it makes you cry;
But you ought to thought of that before you done
it.
Now. See that piece with all the monkeys on it?
You scrape awhile on that. Maybe it'll help you
Remember to cut out monkey-business hereafter."
He thought that joke was swell, and kept on
chucklin'.

That's the way it went the whole afternoon.
Ern and me workin', and Pa settin' and readin',
And all the while us thinkin' about the circus.
The last part, I was tired it was just like
The time I had the measles and the fever.
And when ma hollered "Supper!" from the house,
I didn't even have enough sense to notice.

All through supper, Pa didn't talk to us.
We didn't care. Gee what a wonderful supper!
I et three helpin's of chicken and potatoes,
And green-apple pie!—two pieces! And six
doughnuts!
Wasn't Ma grand to do that for us? Gee!
If we could only of got Ma to talk
To Pa in the first place—still she's sort of scared
The way we are. 'Cause lots of times she said,
"Your Pa's a just man, boys." That's a swell
word, "Just!"

Ern and me was plumb stuffed full of supper.
I couldn't hardly walk. Ern, he set there,
And Ma comes over and gives us both a hug,
And kissed us; but Pa got up like he didn't see.
"Poor boys!" says Ma, "But don't you worry no more.
Your Pa is goin' to have Jed Allen come
And do the rest of the scrapin', and paint the school
Again. It's goin' to cost him fifteen dollars.
But I guess you learnt your lesson, didn't you?"

She kissed us again, and went into the kitchen.
Ern started cryin' this time. He was awful sleepy.
"I'm goin' up to bed," he says, and gulps.
The sun was still shinin', but we was ready for bed.
Ern went on up. But I listened at the door
To the kitchen, and heard Ma sayin' to Pa "Oh, my!
I feel so sorry for 'em. They got the tickets.
Why don't you let 'em go tonight?"

Pa snorted.
"Go? Why say—they'd fall to sleep in their seats!
The place for them is bed. And besides which,

They got to have their lesson all complete."

Then Ma says, "Well—why don't you let 'em go
Monday
To Olean? Why—I could take 'em myself!"

But Pa got sort of mad, then. "No, I told you!"
He says real loud, "Olean? Twenty miles!
Sue's feet is bad. No, not one step. Now drop
it!
They's goin' to be other circuses other years."

Then Ma says, sort of to herself, "Yes, Frank.
I understand it better than you do.
No other circuses won't be like this one."

"Can't help it!" Pa yells, "That's the end of
it!"
And he starts comin' over towards the door,
So I run quick upstairs, and gets to bed.

But I was thinkin' awful fast, you bet.
Olean, that's the place, that's what Ma said.
They ain't no way to get there but two roads.
One of 'em runs along in front of our house,
The other one is most a mile away,
Across our farm, and the hollow, and Brandt's
farm.
Gee whiz! If we could only see the wagons!—

Ern, he was sleepin' with his clo'es still on.
I took mine off as quick as you can say it,
And pushed Ern over, and started shakin' him.
Then he woke up, and I begun to tell him.

Was he excited! "But how're we goin' to wake
up?
We can't stay up all night, bein' so sleepy.
And they'll go awful early. That's the way
Circuses always do."

So then I says
"We can both go to sleep thinkin' about it.
And that way we'll wake up. Don't you re-
member
The way it worked last Fourth?"

So Ern says, "Sure,"
And off we went to sleep. But both of us
Kept wakin' up, all night. It didn't do
Much good to go to sleep, anyways, 'cause
I just kept seein' cages and elephants,
And wagons, whirlin' round and round and round.

III

But after a while I heard a rooster crow,
And then another one. I jumped up quick,

And pulled up Ern, and ran to the east window.
Gee, was it still, and black as the inside
Of a black cat. But there was the roosters crowin',
And we thought the sun ought to be comin' up
Any time now. And it wasn't very cold,
'Cause it was the middle of June. Well, maybe I
Was scared. I wanted to go back to bed.
But Ern says "No! We just can't miss this much!
We just got to see it, and we got to go
Right now." So then we put our clo'es on quick,
And I quit shiverin', and we both took blankets,
To sit on, and we carried our shoes, and started.

Gee, was it scarey, goin' down the steps!
The boards kept creakin', and I didn't see
How Pa could stay asleep. I was just sure
That any second he would come a-runnin',
And give us Ned, and chase us back to bed.
But we got through the door, and into the yard.

It was so quiet we didn't dast to breathe
Out loud, and even the roosters had quit crowin'.
They wasn't a sound, and we couldn't see a thing.
But we ran down the road, away from the house,
And Ern comes over and whispers, "Say, you silly,

What makes you think this here's the road they'll
take?
The other road's a whole lot better travellin'!"

Well, I just had a hunch they'd take the one
In front of our house. But of course, it's true
Brandt's road was lots the best. What could we
do?

"I know," I says, "I'll stay here by this road,
And you go over by Brandt's, and watch, and so
Whichever way it comes, They's one of us
Will see it. If it's me, I'll run and find you,
And if it's you, you come and tell me. See?"

"Yeh, that's a swell idear," says Ern, "You think
I'm goin' way over there, acrost the holler,
With snakes and everything, and pretty near
A mile away? All by myself? No sir!
Why don't you do it yourself, if you're so smart?"
"Well, then," I says, "We got to both stay here.
You're the one thinks they're comin' the other
road."

"They are! They are!" he says, "But just the
same
We got to use some sense. Now just suppose
It comes there, how can I get back and tell you?

The both of us would miss it, doin' that.
You're such a dumb-head!"

Then I got the scheme.
"All right. I tell you. We'll get in the middle,
Right on the edge of the holler. And you watch
One road, and I'll keep watchin' on the other.
Then we can both run to the road it comes."

So that was what we did. Ern takes a blanket,
And goes to Brandt's side of the holler, and sets,
And I set on a little hill, on our side.

It was still awful black. I was so scared
I started to shiver again. And then a owl
Begun to hoot, and I knew all the time
It was a owl, but it scared me just the same.
And a fog commenced to come up from the holler,
And it looked just like a sheet you spread to dry.

Well, I set there, and started in to whistle,
And I listened, and told stories to myself,
About the lions and taggers, and I couldn't
See anything, or hear, and still the sun
Just wouldn't come up. And I was afraid
The fog would get so thick we couldn't see
The wagons when they come, and I was gettin'
So sleepy, and my eyes begun to hurt,
And I just laid on the blanket for a second. . . .

IV

All of a sudden Ern was shakin' me,
It was broad daylight, and the fog was gone.
And Ern kept yellin', over and over, "We missed
it!
What did you have to go and go to sleep for!
We missed it! Why, it must of went long ago!"

We started runnin' back over to our place,
And I says, "Well, what're you yellin' about?
You went to sleep, too, didn't you? So, you
see!"

We kept on runnin' over past the cow-shed,
And heard Pa milkin', but we didn't stop.
And in the road, we seen it, sure enough.
There was the tracks, some deep, deep tracks, and
ruts
That didn't look more than an hour old.
And then we both just laid down on the grass,
And cried, and cried.

But after a minute or so,
I heard somebody behind us. It was Ma,
And she says, "Hello, boys! You up so early?"

Ern ran to Ma, and put his head in her apron.

And cried, and kept on sayin' "Ma! We missed it!
We didn't even get to see the wagons!"
Ma brought him over where I was, and hugged us,
And then says, "Look! Why, just look in the road!"

Then all three of us looked down in the mud,
At the side of the road, and there was a great big hole
As big as a barrel!

"Sure as you're born," says Ma,
That's where the elephant stepped!" And we stopped cryin',
Because it was! It was round on the edges,
That was the place his toes was. Oh, gee whiz!
It was a great big elephant, I bet you!
We took the blankets, and some sticks, and made
A tent, and left a little hole, to peek through.
Ma didn't tell Pa about us gettin' up,
Or missin' the wagons— I mean, I guess she didn't,
He didn't say a word to us about it.

Then we went in, and had a great big breakfast,
And we was all excited, and I don't see

Why Ma kept wipin' her eyes, or why she said,
"Poor boys! I know a lot of folks that miss
Their circus in the fog."

We didn't miss it,
Not all of it. Because didn't we fix
A sign that said, "The Real Live Elephant's
Foot,"
And charge a penny a look, and a whole crowd
Of the boys and girls came over, and paid a penny,
Even the ones that went to the reg'lar circus?

And then, maybe next year this time—
Gee whiz!

John Butler Yeats

I saw him once: a slender, tottering man
Stood on a stage; and seemed about to fall
At every moment; and a voice began,
Like a thin echo from some far-off wall,
To tremble through the room; and what it said
Concerned "the Arts" and "tireless endeavor"—
How heavy-handed years may bow the head,
But Beauty lifts the soul of man forever.
His hearers, smug in manner and attire
Of cosmopolitan sophistication;
That crumpled figure, lit as by a fire
With an unfashionable consecration—
Oh, futile gesture, fleeting as a breath!
Oh, Beauty, laughing in the face of Death!

The City

I was steppin' along, whistlin',
  And Spring was liftin' my feet.
The buildings was all bright in the sun,
  There was gold in the street.

And just that minute, in the Square
  What did I have to see
Inside of a rusty wire cage
  But a scraggly tree.

"Help! Help!" I thought it said. . . .
  Its branches was all tired and thin. . . .
Was the cage to pertect it, and keep things out,
  Or the tree in?

Oh, I know it was silly, but right then
  My feet felt somethin' holdin' 'em down.
And the whistle was gone, and the gold was only
  A sick brown.

"White Shadows"

I

Dreams?
  Take 'em away!
Dreams?
  Never again for me!
Be good?—What does it get you?
Be true?—What to?
Real love?—Try and get it!
Success?—You can have it!

White shadows!
White shadows on green trees;
Green leaves, thick like a wall;
Green, so dark it's black;
Not a sound; nothin' movin';
Nobody knows;
Nobody cares—

Every time I close my eyes—
And I'm closin' my eyes most of the time,
But not to dream!—

If I could only get there, to them South Sea Islands!
Maybe I got a wrong idea about 'em,
Maybe I couldn't find what I want if I got there,
Maybe it's all the same if I go to Hell here or anywheres elst—
But I wisht to Heaven I never seen them books,
I wisht to Heaven I never heard of South Sea Islands,
Or dances, or men,
Or nothin'—

I always had two things different from most girls—
I was pretty, and I could shake the feet.
Night after night, down in Skaneateles,
I would lay in bed, with my eyes closed tight.
Sleep wouldn't come, only sorta dreams—
Ditchin' the store on Genesee Street,
Goin' to New York, gettin' on the stage,
Workin' to the top, name in lights—
I was pretty, and I could shake the feet.

All the time
There was that other dream—
Some man—a real man—
That I was goin' to love,
Some man that would be

Good enough for me,
But me too good for him—
See what I mean?
Gee, it's hard to say!
That would be love—
A real, real love—
Me lovin' him,
But him lovin' more!

But could I find that
In Skaneateles,
Say it with oil-cans!
Do I have to tell you about makin' the break?
And landin' a job, and three years in the chorus,
One in New York, and two on the road?
Three rotten years!
And then—the front row!

II

So then, six weeks ago, we started rehearsin'
For this "You Tell 'em" . . . I was livin' with Mame
On Seventy-second Street. And that first day,
Just as I was comin' out of the door
It was like somebody shot me in the chest.
Of course, nobody didn't really shoot me,
But there was a man, holdin' the door open.

You see? You understand? There was my dream!
Holdin' the door! I never seen him before,
But right away I knew that it was him.

I couldn't say a thing, exceptin' "Thank you!"
But all the way to the theater, a crazy song
Without no tune kept racin' round inside
My head: "He lives there, too! He lives there, too!"
I looked in the lookin'-glass by the stage door—
I didn't know myself, I was so pretty!

I gets into my place, and Mr. Long—
That's the director—give me just one look,
And goes to the corner, and whispers to the backer,
And says, "Miss Lane! Just step out here a second!"
The two of them, they give me the once-over,
And whispers, and then they put it up to me:
"Do you want to do a number by yourself?
A South Sea dance. I wouldn't be surprised
Was you the very girl we're lookin' for."

Well, what did I care for the dirty looks
The other girls was givin'? I started thinkin'
About that dream-man, that had held the door,

And I says to myself, "Good Luck! Already!"
They give me the dance, and five whole lines to say!
Was I excited! Ast me!

But what I was most excited about was the man.
It was a week till I could get Miss Rogers
She runs the boardin'-house—to interdooce us.
And then, the dumb way that I acted! My!
He was dumb-actin' too. And so up-stage!
Just about twenty-four is what he was,
But young for that; and he was sort of scared.
And I kept thinkin' he didn't have no use
For chorus-girls; thought he was too good for 'em,
I guess. Miss Rogers told me that he came
From a real good family out there in Cleveland,
And she heard he used to be engaged to a swell
That gave him the gate. That was three years ago,
And he was off of any kind of girls.

He told me somethin' about that, later on.
But that first night, all he managed to tell me
Was that he was in New York studyin' law,
And had to go up now and get to work.

He sorter squirmed, and kept on lookin' around,
And tryin' to get way. I was so mad!

I loved his curly hair, and his black eyes,
And the way he was so strong, and still so shy
And proud. Just a kid, really, and I wanted
To take his head and pull it down, and pat it,
And smooth his hair, and, you know, say, "There,
there."

III

So a whole month went on, and I couldn't seem
To make a bit of progress with that boy.
'Cause every time I tried out some new gag,
Like bein' sympathetic, or actin' like
A two-year-old, hopin' I wouldn't scare him,
Or make that darn proud look come into his eyes,
It didn't get me much of anywheres.

The one time that he really opened up
Was just a little somethin' about the girl,
And how he hated her now, and he was glad
She threw him down, and taught him what girls
was.

I says, "But women isn't all alike, Jack."
Then he froze up, and says, "Ain't they, Miss
Lane?"
Lettin' me know the "Jack"-stuff didn't get by.
Just think of that! The man I'd always dreamed
of—

And when I found him, all he done was run!
I couldn't see why, 'cause Mr. Long kept sayin'
I had refine beauty, and was a ringer
For Elsie Ferguson, if you know what I mean.

But what could I do? I bet I cried a bucket-full
A night. And when I didn't cry—I read!

Yeh, can you tie it? The readin' was Long's doin'.
It was when we started rehearsin' for the dance.
Long says to me, "Now, girlie, about this dance:
You sure do shake your dogs the way you oughta,
And, what I mean, you got the neck and shoulders,
And other things, includin' one cute face.
Now what you got to get is atmosphere.
Look. Here's a book about them South Sea Islands.
You take and read it. Don't you skip a page.
And when you get through this, I got two more."

Of course, I hated to start in on readin' it
But in three pages I couldn't leave it loose.
Readin' about them heathen, lovely places,
It was like fallin' into a different world.
Layin' in the sand, and watchin' big blue waves,
And nothin' to think of exceptin' love—

Love, and white shadows, and a round white moon.

Talk about atmosphere! I got so while
I was rehearsin' my dance, I would be thinkin'
About the things in the book. And just like magic
Those wasn't footlights there in front of me—
They was big sea-shells, on a lonely island.
And all the time I kept seein' Jack right there—
Jack, and his curly hair, and his black, black eyes.

And did I dance! All of a sudden I knew
That I was good. Long come right up, one day,
And he had a look he hadn't had before.
He takes my hand, and drags me to one side,
"Say, Janie Lane, you sure have got the stuff!
We certainly got some dancin' South Sea Kid!
But that ain't all I got to say. Look here,
I'm crazy about you, kid, and that's a fact.
What do you say you come and have dinner with me?"

It wouldn't have took no three-year-old to know
What he was drivin' at. And let me tell you,
He's some good-lookin' guy. And besides which
He sure has got some drag in the perfession.

But even while I was thinkin' all those things,
Jack and his eyes come poppin' in my mind,
And I answers up, "Why, Mr. Long! You know
You got a wife. I ain't that kind of a girl."

Long, he just smiles a sort of sad-like smile,
And says, "Well, if you know that much about me,
You know how much I care about the wife,
Or her about me, either. Don't you see?
I'm crazy about you, honey. If you want
To be my friend, I'll put you up among 'em.
I know the stuff you got. And if you'll let me
I'll make you the best dancin'-act on Broadway."

But I looked away. And he coughed a couple of times,
And then he says, "It's all right, Janie, dear.
Don't let it worry you. You just keep up
The good work. See? And if you think that you
Could ever love me—why, I'm right here, kid,
And always waitin' for you. See? Good-night."

Well, that was swell of him, wasn't it, now?
But I was wild about that Jack, of course,
And the Prince of Wales couldn't of made no impression.

IV

And so it got to the day of the dress-rehearsal,
And Mame and me was comin' into the house;
Who should we see but Jack, with two big law-books.
Here was my chance. "Why Jack!" I starts right in,
"You're just the person I'm after!" "Oh," he says,
And yawns, "Gee, but I'm tired. I've been studying.
I have to take my bar exam next week."

"A bar exam!" I make a snappy answer,
"What won't them prohibition-hounds do next?"—
Makin' a joke, you know. He never smiles.
But I start in again, so he can't go.
"Listen. I want to ast a favor of you.
I know you're awful busy, but look here:
I got a ticket that I want to give you.
We open cold, you know—I mean, we open
Here in New York; we don't go to the sticks.
Tomorrow night we open, and this ticket
Is for the show, tomorrow night, ninth row.
It's a real good show, honest. Won't you come?"

He just looks bored, and says, "I can't afford it;
And anyway I don't like music shows."

"Afford it, nothin'," I says, "I'm givin' it to you.
Won't you please take it? I got the biggest surprise
You ever seen, for you. Please, won't you come?"

He says, slow, "Well, all right." So then I stick
The ticket in his hand, and says, "You might
Just come around behind, after the show.
And—I wouldn't mind if you should bring me home."

Imagine me makin' a play like that for any man!
But there, when you're crazy in love, what can you do?
And when he gives you the high hat, all the time—
I was bound I was goin' to wake him up, I tell you.
I'd make him see that I was really good.
If Long, that I bet has saw a million girls,
Had picked me out—well, it's a cinch there must
Be somethin' about me that would interest men.

V

Well, you know how it was.
The show started off a flop.

The whole first ack, just a mess.
Everybody gloomy and sore,
And not a prayer for it lastin' more
Than a week. But me, did I worry? Ha!

There I am in the dressin'-room,
Jumpin' into that lovely costume—
Just as little as we
Can get away with. And say,
I'm beautiful! I am!
I know it from the green way
All the other girls is starin'.
I know it every time I look
In the mirror.

And so, all the time,
I'm just as cool. Scared?
What for?
Ain't Jack out there, ninth row center?
I got nothin' to lose,
Everything to win!

Quick, I'm in my place,
Layin' alone in the sand,
Chin in my hand,
Watchin' the back drop, where the waves
Is slidin' and glidin' in the movie moonlight.
Best set of any show in town.

Big trees bendin' down
Over me; both sides black bushes;
Other side a grass hut,
Black grass, everything black but me.
I'm the white shadow—see?

There goes the orchestra.
Now the verse is startin'.
Harold Chester is singin' it,
Swingin' it
Soft and sweet.
I hate him, but he sure can sing.
The verse is through—
Now he's on the chorus—
Now the curtain that shuts me off is partin' . . .

(Oh, shut up, heart!
Can't I catch my breath?
Sure, You're all right,
Janie, old girl!
Jack's out there,
Did you forget?)

Just for a minute, the audience
Is quiet as death.
Then, right at the end of the chorus,
I hear a noise start to curl

Up to the stage, a sort of sigh
Like a wind goin' by.

Harold is off left, behind a bush,
Still singin'. There's a dead hush . .
And I get on my feet. . . .

Nothin' but a wild drum,
Beatin' like a big pulse,
"Bum-a-lum-a-lum-bum,
Bum-a-lum-a-lum-bum!". . .
Back of the scenes the male quartet,
And all the time the drum,
And I'm dancin', dancin' . . .

Come back to Ty-peeee,
Come back to meee!
Come to our island
Out in the sea-eeee.
Come where the birds are singing all the day,
Come where the moon is shining on the bay;
Oh, won't you
Come to our hut in Oomoa,
And we'll ne'er go a-
Way.
We'll have nothing but love from morn till night,
Beneath those South Sea Shadows white.
So please come back to Ty-peeee,

To Ty-peeeeee
And meeee—

Jack! Jack! It's you I'm dancin' for!
Do you see me, Jack? Look at me!
I can dance, and I'm beautiful!
And it's all for you, all for you!

Our island, Jack, yours and mine,
Nobody else, just you and me,
And the big round moon,
And the little waves,
And the soft sand,
And the black leaves,
And the white shadows, white shadows,
White shadows and love,
White shadows, way beyond the end of the world—

Don't be scared—take me in your arms—
Let me feel you holdin' me against you—
Let me run my fingers through that curly hair—
Kiss me!
Jack, oh Jack! You waited so long—

Crash!

The wild hands, clappin',

The house is yellin',
They're standin' on their seats!

Crash! Crash!

The clappin'—the yells!
Curtains swingin' wide, closin'. . .
Nine bows . . . they won't stop . . .
Louder and louder! . . .

I dance it again.
Twice, three times!
They won't keep quiet.
They won't let me go.
It's a riot!
I can't believe it, but it's so!
I've stopped the show!
Jack, Jack! Do you see?
It's me that's doin' it!
It's Janie Lane! It's me! . . .

VI

(Why ain't he at the stage door?)
"Thanks, Thanks!"
(Don't he care at all?)
"Oh, Mr. Zieglitz,
I can't talk business tonight.

There's *other* managers."
(Where can he be?)
"Well, all right, Mr. Zieglitz,
Maybe, tomorrow afternoon."

"Oh, thank you, thank you, everybody . . .
Oh, Mr. Long, it's you I got to thank.
You done it all . . .
Oh, Mr. Long, don't ast me that tonight . . .
I'm all upset . . .
I won't forget, honest I won't.
Goodnight! Goodnight!
Please leave me by. . . .
Come on, Mame!
Yeh, get a taxi . . .
Mame, don't say a word . . .
Don't let me cry, Mame . . .
Mame, where can he be? . . ."

. . . . . .

"Mame! Open the door,
And go on up ahead."

. . . . . .

"Oh, Mame, hold me tight—
Here he comes—see him?
Look—isn't that him?

"Why, Jack,—it's you—
What're you doin' with that book?

Where—
Where was you all the time?
Ain't you got nothin' to say?"

"What!
"What? You never went?
You never—oh, you fool!
You dirty, low-life fool!
You and your lousy studyin'!
Get outa my way!
And I was wastin' my time on you! . . ."

White shadows!
Oh, my God. . . .

Heat

I

The empty house yawns gloomily
Up at the empty, cloudless sky;
The scorching August sun-rays beat
On a dull wilderness of heat.

The pump is crumbling, red with rust;
The door is silver-white with dust.
No hay-ricks, joggling homeward, pass;
A chipmunk scuttles through the grass.

The burdock and the ragweed keep
Corners where roses used to sleep.
The crazy windows leer and stare
At ragged trees that once were fair.

And still, beneath that empty sky
It stands in changeless dignity.
Few things I know are quite as grave
As any house—or quite as brave.

II

And still it wouldn't rain!
The rows in the garden was just like deep, dry wrinkles
On an old face that's all pinched up with pain.
The poor peas rattled and coughed in the hot west breeze.
The limas had given up tryin' to climb their poles.
There was hisses like chokin' breaths. . . . That was the trees.

It was late in the afternoon, and the wife and me
Stood lookin' out at the parchin', pantin' hills,
When she says, "Look!" And I begun to see
Soft, hazy somethin', like a smoke, start driftin'
Out of the ground, and risin' way up high.
It wasn't mist. It was blue. And besides, the sun
Was grinnin' down, and not a cloud in the sky.

The wife turns round, and she gives a sad sorta smile.
"I know what that is," she says,
"It's the kind of thing the Indians used to think,
I guess you'll say. But that there soft blue haze
Is the souls of all the flowers and little plants

That's been killed by the drought.
They're goin' up to see the Evil Spirit,
To try and find out
If maybe it hasn't had enough sacrifices.
They want to show that they were willin' to give
Their lives for the sake of what the drought
might spare,
And ast if it won't let just a little live."

I didn't have the heart for such kid notions as that.
I watched the shrivelin' corn, and shook my head,
And went inside the house, to try and forget
That everlastin' heat, stretched on the bed.

And all of a sudden I was awake again,
And the trees was slappin' the roof, and thunder
was roarin',
And, like the bottom fell out of the sky,
The good old rain was pourin'!

III

I wouldn't be Zeke!
What do you s'pose he had the nerve to do?
Of course the drought
Burnt up his garden, and his flowers, too.
But still and all
There was the corn, that wasn't hurt so bad.

And then it hailed,
And beat down every single stalk he had.
Zeke stands out there,
Next day, and like to cries, and hollers, "Hell!"
And shakes his fist
Straight up, and then he gives one awful yell:
"If I was tryin'
To be a God,"—(lightnin' 'll strike him, sure!)
"I'd be a God,
And not a durned old whiskered amachoor!"

Letters

Almost a week, and not a line from you.
And just a year ago, once every day,
Or three times, even, you would write and say
"I love you! Oh, I love you! It's all true!
It's like a song, our love is. Oh, my dear
There isn't any minute I don't miss you!
If I could only touch you now, or kiss you!
Things are just flat and stale without you here!"

Oh, yeh? Let's see this note six days ago:
"Not much of any news . . . it's awful hot . . .
I don't do very much. . . . Oh, I forgot;
I went last night with Charlie to a show. . . ."

What was that movie line about "Love's dawn"?
Where's the waste-basket? Please excuse the
yawn.

Sixteen

I was just that month sixteen,
  And you couldn't of believed it was really night
The way you could see the apple-blossoms,
  The moon was so bright.

Now it wasn't account no girl or nothin'
  I could ever get words to tell about,
But the smell and the moon got chokin' me,
  And I just stretched out

In the thin little grass, and all a sudden
  I was cryin' like you'd think I wanted to die;
But it was only just that everything was perfect
  That made me cry.

I was one damn-fool kid, ain't it so?
  But I got plenty hard-boiled since that time,
And the moon—only looks like a paper-bag, say,
  Or a thin dime.

A Sailor Gropes for Words

I thought maybe I could stay on the job,
But I didn't guess how I was goin' to feel
With you this far away. The times before,
When I was sure I was in love for fair,
It wasn't hard a bit to get away—
Tell you the truth, I useta be sort of glad,
Because I knew all the time it wasn't real.
But here we're four days out, and it gets worse
The further away we get. It's the real thing
This time. It is! Listen, I just can't stand it.
I got to get some job on land, that's all.

This mornin', when I was lookout, on the bow,
I watched us slicin' through the hard green water;
It made me laugh to see the flyin'-fish
Shoot out, like little airyoplanes, for kids.
And lots of jelly-fish, and porpoises
Real solemn—like old preachers goin' swimmin';
And Portygee men-o'-war, sailin' along
So proud that they could sail their little ships.
I almost forgot you for a little time;

Say! It was good to smell the sea again—
I just kep' grinnin' over bein' alive!

But now, tonight, standin' here in the stern,
I watched the wake behind us, all on fire,
Like it was made of billions of fireflies
That drownded, but their lights never went out—
Remember them fireflies that last night there
When we was walkin' down towards the crick?—
So lovely! Little stars down in the water,
And up above more stars. Beautiful things
Around me, beautiful things inside of me,
Because I love you so, and you love me.

I never guessed that love could be like that—
It's sort of holy, like, and clean, and all.
The way you want to start in singin' hymns . . .
While I was watchin', I got thinkin' how
Maybe it might be better, while it's perfect,
And all so beautiful, just to—you know—quit.
I mean—keep it the way it is—our love
Like now; and never have to take the chance
Of gettin' tired, or lettin' it get stale
And cryin' afterwards because it's gone.
(Ain't love like everything? How can it last?)

—If I should just stand on the rail a second,
And lean 'way over, and slip down in the stars—

But strength is beautiful, too; and bein' strong
Means take your chance, and make it come out
right.
They's always hope, as long as you can remember
The quiet way we understood, that night.
We can always keep things like that. What are
we scared of?

If you was only here! It's so beautiful!
I won't look any longer: it ain't right.
What right has anything got bein' lovely
If you ain't by my side, and see it with me?

That settles it. I got to quit the sea. . . .

Problem for a Young Girl

Well, don't you see? I had a box of candy,
And I tore it open, and it looked so fine,
And tasted wonderful! And so I et it,
As fast as I could eat. And when it was gone
I was so sick I couldn't hold my head up.
So the next time I got a box, I says,
"I'll save this one, and eat it little by little;
I'll make it last this time, and I won't get sick."
But mice got in, and ants, and it was ruined.

Ain't there no way you can do with a box of
candy?
And suppose it ain't candy, but bein' in love I
mean:
Oh, has it always got to be too fast,
So that it's gone right-off, and leaves you sick,
Or else it drags along and gets all stale?
Has it got to be always either one or the other?

Forty-eight Hours from June

I

Yesterday the thermometer was near zero.
It may go up tomorrow. All the same,
Three months of winter yet. I just can't stand
it!
The slush, the gloomy clouds, the people sneezin',
Two of the girls at the office have the flu,
And all the extra work! Oh, it's too much!

How can you talk about what's "good" and
"bad"?
How can you find out which is which? Yeh,
how?

What can you do on twenty-seven a week,
Poundin' a Remington, and givin' half
To Ma, and tryin' to buy decent clothes,
And have a good time once in a while and still
Stay "pure"? That's what I do. I'm twenty-
one,
And lots of people say that I'm real pretty.
But what have I got to look forward to?

Get married, yeh, to some of these poor fish
That haven't got a cent, and work and slave—
That's a swell future, ain't it? Me, with dreams
Of all the places that I'd like to go,
And never seen one, yet. Oh, what a life!

You see, I had a little secret game
Ever since I was ten. You take these folders
That railroads have, and sit down in a chair
And read, and go all over the whole world.

"Plowin' through emerald waters to the Soo"—
Now, that's the Great Lakes cruise. Or take
this one:
"Ridin' the singin' rails into the sunset"—
That one's the line of the Sunset Limited,
Bound for the Golden Gate. . . . You get the
idea?
Well, that's the only travelin' I have.
And when I've always been so wild to go,
And see new places, and lovely, far-off cities,
It's fun, all right, to read. But just now, lately,
That East wind howlin' and beatin' against the
panes,
And snow—snow—snow—

Five days ago I met this Mr. Kirby,
And he's a millionaire, from Montreal.

He owns a chain of wholesale groceries
That spreads all over eastern Canada.
You see, he buys through us. And so he stops
In here to do some buyin' from old Gannet,
Before he goes to Bermuda, for six weeks.

Well, the other day he has to write some letters,
So Gannet calls for me, because I'm fast
Transcribin', and I like to take dictation.
I watched this Mr. Kirby all the time.
He's just the sort of man I like to see,
Reminds me quite a lot of Pa, you know—
Blue eyes, and a sharp nose, and reg'lar features,
But what is most like Pa, and most romantic,
Is on his temples, where the hair is turnin'
Light grey—the way you read of in the stories.

And so I take his letters, all the while
Sneakin' a look at him, and gettin' thrills,
All of a sudden I notice what he says
Ain't makin' sense. And I look up real quick,
And he is watchin' me, and smilin' at me—
Not fresh, you see, but sort of shy and sweet.

I get all flustered. He gets flustered, too,
And coughs, and finishes the letters up
Real sharp. But when I start to leave the room

He coughs again, and says, "Miss uh—Miss uh—"
"Miss Forbes," I says, and smiles. He sort of stutters.
"Oh yes, Miss Forbes. I have a lot more letters
To do tomorrow. Don't you think Mr. Gannet
Might let you take them?" I was pleased, of course,
"Why, yes, sir." Then he coughs again, and says,
"It's seldom I can find a girl, you see,
Who doesn't find the way I dictate hard.
It doesn't seem to worry you at all,
And that is why"—He breaks off there, and coughs
Again. So I say, "Thank you, Mr. Kirby,"
And go back to my desk to type the letters.

Maybe you don't believe my heart was skippin'!
Can y'imagine a man with all that money,
And pretty near forty, and all the experience
He must of had, chokin' up over me,
And not knowin' what to say, and gettin' shy?
"Why, gee, he's just a kid, for all his years,"
I says to myself, and felt all warm inside.

I finished up the letters fast as I could.
But still I had to stay long after closin'.

I took the letters in to Fallon's office,
Where Mr. Kirby give me the dictation,
And put 'em on the desk, and started out,
When somethin' hit my eye. I walked right over,
And before I could stop myself, I snitched it out.
It was the prettiest folder I ever seen;
A lovely beach with blue, blue sky, and water
A lighter blue, like Mr. Kirby's eyes;
And on the beach a fella and girl
In bathin' suits . . . And gee, but it was lovely!
But the thing that got me most was the title of it;
Oh, what a title, with the snow outside,
And the wind like a knife—"Forty-eight Hours From June."

Goin' home to Brooklyn, I squeezed the folder tight,
Not lookin' at it, because I was savin' it,
The way you save a special piece of candy.
And I didn't mind the way Ma kept on scoldin'
About me bein' late. I let her rave.
Then after supper, locked up in my room,
I took the folder out, and then—what fun!

"Balmy Bermuda"—that was its other name,
That went right under "Forty-eight Hours From June."

Pages on pages about the coral beaches,
And palm trees, and the birds, and grand golf-courses—
I didn't want to play, of course; I wanted
To just walk on the wonderful green grass,
Knowin' that up in New York, folks was freezin'.
And then, the hotels! Most a dozen of them,
And if they're like their pictures, all of 'em
Are bigger than the Pennsylvania station.
"De luxe accommodations, bath, steam heat,
Superior cuisine, golf and tennis privilege,
Twelve dollars per day, and up, American plan."
Oh, ain't that grand? And then a lot of pictures
Of yachts, and steamer chairs out in the sun,
And the big ships that go there, and the names
Of the hotels are all so beautiful:
The "Princess," "Hamilton," "Bermudiana"—
They drive me crazy, sayin' 'em to myself.

I kept on readin' that folder, over and over,
Till I must of gotten hypnotized, or somethin';
All I remember was dreamin' of golden sands,
All warm and shiny, and walkin' through big hotels
With marble steps, and ridin' on bicycles.
And when I woke up, there was the electric light
Still burnin', and it burnt the whole night long.
Say, but Ma's goin' to rave about the bill!

II

I didn't feel so good, goin' down to the office;
The day was grey, and the wind was somethin'
fierce.
A fine thing to wake up to—"Balmy Bermuda!"
But thank the Lord, it was a Saturday,
And only a half-day. But the bunch of work
They handed me sure did make up for it.
I didn't get a chance to think about
The weather, or the cold. I just kept workin'.

Then, about half-past ten, old Gannet rung,
And when I went to his office, sure enough
There was that Mr. Kirby, lookin' cheerful
And twice as handsome, and smilin' very friendly.
"I have a few more letters I want to give you,
And Mr. Gannet says that you may take them,
And give your other work to some other girl."

I ran back to my desk, and grabbed my pad,
And my heart was beatin' fast, wasn't that silly?
And I took the folder, too, hid under the pad;
So we had Fallon's office again to ourself.
And Mr. Kirby starts in very business,
And gives me several notes to Canadian firms,
And then he looks at me, and smiles again.

Then, like he had a good joke all his own,
He starts another letter, "My dear Ann."

That letter goes along, friendly and nice,
But not a bit of love, if you know what I mean.
Just about how he hoped that she was well,
And he hoped she was enjoyin' her stay in England,
And how he thought the school the kids was at
Was a real good place for good colonial boys.
She mustn't hurry back on his account,

But he might join her in London, in the summer.
Oh, sure, you guessed it—it was to his wife.
I thought it was funny a man should write to his wife
Dictatin' the letter. . . . And that's the point, you see;
Because, when I got through, and was thinkin' about
Him bein' married, and not likin' his wife,
And told him I'd try to have the letters done
Before he left for lunch, he smiles again.
And says, "On second thoughts, don't bother about
The last one. You may simply tear it up."
A-ha! I knew it all the time! He only
Wrote it to tell me that he had a wife,

And wasn't very crazy about her. Gee!
Aren't men the simplest? But it was sort of cute.

There wasn't any mistake about it now.
I knew he was tryin' to get intimate.
But he was goin' about it nice, wasn't he?
And he was real handsome, with his temples grey,
And yet that real young face. Of course I could
Of stopped the whole thing there. But somethin' made
Me flirt a little, just curious, I guess.
I swear, I'm not that kind. I never flirt,
Honest, I never do. I'm real cold, even,
And if old Gannet was like lots of bosses
That like to get handy every now and then
I would of got the gate long time ago.
Well, never mind. . . . I started towards the door,
Then I turned back, and hauled the folder out,
And says, "Oh, Mr. Kirby, please don't mind,
But I borried this last night, when you was gone."

His face lights up, and he waves his hand, and says,
"Keep it. But why did you want it, anyway?"
I says, "I like to read about those places;
Gee, but I envy you, goin' down there,
With balmy winds, and beautiful soft skies."

He stands and looks at me for a few seconds,
Then, "Look, Miss Forbes, I like you. Very much.
I get so sick of the regular sort of people—
And you're so very different. No, don't smile;
I know that sounds like things you've heard before,
But I'm in earnest. Yes, you're really different.
You have a—well, call it a point of view.
It isn't in what you say—you haven't said much—
It's something in the way you hold yourself,
And a twinkle in your eyes, when they're not dreamy,
And—anyway, I'm feeling terribly bored
With all the usual things I have to do.
Have you an engagement tomorrow afternoon?"

Well, there it was. I s'pose that was the time
For me to stop things short. And for a second
I thought it over, wonderin' what to do.
You see, Al had his reg'lar Sunday date,
And prob'ly would be awful sore at me
For standin' him up. But Al! What does he matter?
Clerk in a cigarette store! And he thinks he's funny—
Just a wise-cracker. . . . That's the only sort
Of boys I ever know, it seems to me.

Thinkin' of Al made me all sick inside,
And before I really meant to, I says, "No,
I haven't got a date."

"That's fine," he says,
I'll meet you anywhere you say. If it's clear,
We'll go for a walk. Or I can get Gannet's car,
He has an extra roadster. How would that be?"

"Think you could ever find your way to
Brooklyn?"
I asts. He laughs, and says he's sure he can.
So then we fix it up that he's to meet me
Flatbush and Fulton at three, because, you see
I didn't want him drivin' up to the house,
Ma's so peculiar, and so awful nosey,
And Al might some way be hangin' around.

So it was settled. But as I went to the door,
He calls out, "Just a minute. You forgot
The folder, didn't you?" and hands it to me.
And just that sort of seemed to seal the bargain.

III

You wouldn't be very interested in hearin'
About what happened before next afternoon.
Except I bought a hat—that peachy one

At Gimbels', that I'd wanted for a month,
And it sure did knock a chunk from the old bank-
roll,
But I just couldn't resist it; I wanted to look
As pretty as I could when I met Mr. Kirby.
Can you believe it? Me, that watches my step,
Gettin' excited over a married man?
And I *was* excited, too. And very happy.

Erma kep' astin' me questions. Her and me
Was window-shoppin' the rest of the afternoon,
On the Avenue. Oh, and the wonderful clothes
We looked at. . . . And the strings of pearls,
and di'monds! . . .
Well, anyway, she was suspicious because
Even though it was colder than Charity,
I didn't complain the way I usually do.
But she didn't guess what I was thinkin' about.

I was so happy I kidded Al along,
And made him change the date to takin' me
To the movie that night. And I was nice to him
So he didn't know what to make of me, he said,
And ast me to marry him again—that's twelve
Or maybe thirteen times this year already;
And I wasn't half as mean, sayin' no to him,
As I am generally. And he was pleased,
And thinks he's "makin' progress," so he said.

I don't need to tell you about Ma
Naggin' all Sunday mornin', about why
Couldn't I stay at home all afternoon,
And help her fix a supper for the Somers
And the McQueens, that was comin' over later.
That's Ma all over. Naggin' all the time.
And she wanted to know what was so very important
That I was dressed up, with a bran-new hat—
Where was I goin', and who was I goin' with?
And so-on and so-on. I got nearly crazy.

A quarter to three, and I'd be late, I knew,
If I couldn't shake her off. And so I promised
I wouldn't come back a second later than six,
And that I'd stick around all evenin' and help
Her entertain that flock of terrible owls.
I didn't want to promise. I should say not.
Supposin' Mr. Kirby wanted to take me
To some swell place for supper? But, you see,
It was the only way to shut Ma up.
And so I hurried off, fast as I could,
With Ma still yellin' at me, "Six o'clock!
And don't you dast to be one second late!"

I was so mad, I even took a taxi,
A dollar and a half! Just goin' wild, I guess.
And I got out a block from Flatbush and Fulton,

And paid the man myself. Because, you see,
I didn't want Mr. Kirby to think I was tryin'
Any gold-digger tricks. I ain't that kind.

IV

Well, there he was, standin' next to the subway,
And with a derby on. The only man
I ever saw that could wear one and look fine.
He was just grinnin' all over. "Ah, young lady,"
He says, "I got here fifteen minutes early.
That ought to show how much I think of you!"
And then we go to where the car was parked,
And it was just the cutest Cadillac roadster—
Can y'imagine old Gannet in a roadster?
So Mr. Kirby tucked me in all snug,
And off we started, out to Prospect Park.

I didn't say a thing. He didn't, either.
We just sat there, and let the cold breeze nip us.
Somehow, it wasn't freezin', any more;
It stung, but it was just delicious stingin'.
And overhead there wasn't a single cloud—
One of those spicy days, that look like glass.

Just as we got to the Park, I had an idea.
"Say, Mr. Kirby, drive where I tell you, will you?
I got a little plan. We'll have some fun."

He laughs, and says he will. And so we go
Up to a big brown buildin'. I says, "Stop."
So then, we go inside, he lookin' puzzled,
Until the hot air suddenly smothered us,
And the ripe smells of leaves, and little flowers.

That was a sort of a trick I was playin' on him;
I wanted to see if he'd say somethin' dumb,
The way Al did, the only time I wanted
To go with him into the Flower House.
But Mr. Kirby wasn't that way at all.
He took a great big sniff, and grinned all over:
"Why, that's the quickest trip to South America
I ever heard of. Is this a regular trip—
I mean, is this one of your folder schemes?"
Now, wasn't that grand, his seein' the point so quick?

We walked together down the paths, between
The great big palms, and the banana-bushes,
Or maybe they're trees—well, anyway, we came
To my favorite place, up at the further end,
Where there's a little seat among the rocks,
Right in the ferns, and nobody was near us.
I guess it was too cold out for lots of people.
There couldn't of been a dozen in the place,
And they was mostly down about the middle,
Watchin' the man feedin' the gold-fishes.

The air, so warm and thick, like you could cut it,
And dreamy-smellin'; and a little stream
Was tricklin' out of the rocks, right near our head,
And it sounded just like a ex-ylophone.
We sat there listenin', maybe fifteen minutes,
And not a word. And I didn't mean to speak
When I finally did. The words came out their-self:
"It's like we was sittin' in a different world,
And like a dream, that both of us is dreamin'.
The winter's gone, the whole world's gone away."

Honest, I didn't know I'd really said that,
Until he answered, in a real soft voice,
"Miss Forbes, I'm glad I found a girl like you.
I don't look like the sort of man who likes
To play, and make-believe, and all that stuff,
Do I? But that's exactly what I am.
Nobody would believe it. Why, at home
They call me 'Stick-in-the-mud.' Because, you see,
Nobody guesses what I'm really like.
My wife—well, Ann's a woman in a thousand;
She's a fine wife and mother. Runs the house
Perfectly. . . . And she's very conventional.
In all these years she doesn't know me a bit.
I never dare to let myself go, with her.

She thinks—she thinks I'm just a stick-in-the-mud—
A regular, conventional money-maker,
Who never does a foolish, silly thing.
This Flower-house business is so silly, isn't it—
But there isn't anything I'd have rather done. . . .
I can't imagine Ann ever thinking of it."

With that, he gives a sigh. I felt real guilty.
"Oh, Mr. Kirby," I says, "You know you oughtn't
To say such things to me, about your wife."
Only I couldn't sound just like I meant it.
He was such a kid, such a big, handsome kid.

"Oh, what's the use of lying? Ann's all right,
She's a fine woman. . . . But she rather bores me.
And that's the truth. . . . Why, all my life I've tried
To find some person who would play with me,
Who has taste, and is pretty, and has—dreams.
And now, to think I've found just such a person!"

"Oh, Mr. Kirby! You mustn't say things like that!
I'm only just a stenographer, and you're
A millionaire, that's got a wife, and kids."

"I'm not a millionaire," he says, "And you're a
dear,
And very, very pretty. . . . And that hat!
Where did you manage to find the very one
That would look best on you?"

Well, there you are.
How can you think of what you ought to think of,
When a swell man notices everything,
And shows he thinks you're fine, and really means
it?
In a few minutes, I was tellin' him
All sorts of things I never, never thought
I'd ever tell anybody in the world.
All about Pa, and how he'd been a sailor,
In the last days of sailin'-ships. And how
He used to tell me stories all the time
About his voyages to far-off lands,
Before he quit the sea and married Ma.
And how I guessed maybe it was Pa's stories
That started me on travelin' in my mind,
Usin' the folders. . . . And, oh, lots of stuff.
I talked and he talked, and it was so beautiful!

And he told me about his own pretendin'
To travel, same as me; and how he never
Had got the chance to go over to Europe

But once, and that was when he was real young;
But since he'd been a man, he'd had to work
So hard, buildin' his business up; and now
It was built, of course he went all over
In Canada, and the United States,
But he couldn't get to any foreign countries,
And how he was goin' to Bermuda the first time,
Because he could get back home inside of three days,
If anything went wrong. He was excited
About Bermuda. Only he said some friends
That went there quite a lot told him it wasn't
As warm as all the ads kept sayin' it was.
But just the same, it would be marvelous,
And just like June in Canada, anyways.

All this don't mean so much to you, I guess,
And I can't tell it anything like it was.
This is the point: we sat there two whole hours,
And it was just like all our life we'd waited
For somebody to pour it all out to.
He wasn't a millionaire, married, with kids,
And I wasn't just a stenographer, and poor,
He was a man that was lonely, and always had been,
And handsome, and like a kid. And I was a girl
That he liked, and liked him, and we was friends,
And yet not friends, exactly. You aren't excited

And out of breath, and happy half so much
When you're just friends. . . . It was somethin'
bigger than that.

All of a sudden I saw how dark it was gettin',
And made him look at his watch. So he let go
My hand that he was holdin'—sure, he was,
And I was squeezin' his. Oh, don't you see,
That wasn't anything, the way we felt?—
And looked, and it was twenty-five to six.
And just that minute the man in charge came up,
Growlin'. "All out!" he says, in a mean voice,
"It's five minutes after closin' time, right now."

"Oh, gee," I says, "I've got to run, this minute!"
"Why, don't be silly," Mr. Kirby says,
"We're going to the City, right away,
And have the finest dinner we can find."
"I can't. I simply can't! Ma made me promise
I wouldn't be one second later than six."

"Oh, that's all right. Just telephone your mother
You won't be home."

"Yeh, that sounds good and easy.
But you don't know my Ma. It would spoil
everything!
I'd never hear the end of it. I can't!"

By this time we was almost to the door.
He turns around, and looks back at the place,
And takes my hand and squeezes it again,
And whispers, "Thanks! It was so nice."

And then we get out to the Cadillac,
He helps me in, and starts it up. "All right,
I wouldn't do a thing to start a row.
Where do you live?" I told him. Then he says,
"I'll get you there. It's only twenty blocks,
You say? But let's just stop here in the park
A minute or so. We've got to see that moon."

We were on a curve, and not any traffic near.
He stops, and puts his arm over my shoulder,
And pulls me over, real gently, so I could see.
I had to sort of bend, to get a look,
And leaned against his coat. The cloth was rough,
And it smelt healthy, and like good cigars,
If you know what I mean. It was delicious.

"Isn't it glorious?" Mr. Kirby whispers,
"But it's a dying moon . . . it's going fast,
Just like our day . . . and just like everything
That's beautiful." He gives a little sigh.

I felt so sad. He was such a kid, you see;
I couldn't help it, I just leaned over a little

And put my cheek against that warm, rough coat,
And then he tightened his arm around my shoulder,
And before I realized it, there was his face,
Coming down toward mine, and I was glad.
And then we kissed. . . .

Now, I don't mean to say
That no man ever kissed me before. How silly.
But all the rest were just kid-kisses, or jokes.
But this—it was like flames was in my eyes,
And all the orchestras in all the world
Was playin' some wild piece. . . .

V

How long it was like that, I couldn't tell you.
I only know I didn't want it ever
To stop. I didn't care if the world ended.
What woke us up was a voice, right at my elbow.
"Say, what the hell do you think this is?" it said,
"A public neckin'-ground?"

Gee, what a crash.
I jumped, and looked to see what was the matter.
But Mr. Kirby, he was furious.
He got right out of the car, and walked real quick
Round to the cop, and ast him what the devil

He meant by gettin' insultin' to a lady.
Then they had words. The cop was awful sassy,
The way cops always are. And Mr. Kirby
Started in calm, but he got madder and madder.
Then what did the cop do but ast for his drivin'-
license.
And of course he didn't have one. So the cop
Finishes up, "All right, you come with me.
We'll take a little ride to the station-house."
And nothin' that Mr. Kirby could do or say
Made any difference.

He came around to me,
As sweet as he could be, and says, "I'm sorry,
Miss Lucy, I certainly do apologize.
There's no way out. I must go with this officer.
And you'll be terribly late. But here—I know.
I'll stop the first taxi that we come to, and
You can dash home. I'll straighten this matter
out."

So then we trailed along out of the Park,
The cop chuggin' along, hangin' on to the fender.
You know, it's funny, I didn't feel ashamed
One bit. I was mad for Mr. Kirby's sake,
And sorry our afternoon was endin' that way,
But I was still drunk and dreamy from that kiss,
And sort of desperate to think that he

Was goin' away—just when I'd got to know
him!

We stopped a taxi, and he put me in it.
The cop was grinnin', nasty, by the curb.
And Mr. Kirby leaned inside the window,
And says, "Please, please don't be annoyed.
And thank you for the pleasantest afternoon
I ever had. I'm writing you a note.
You see, I have to be in Philly tomorrow,
And Tuesday. But I've something I want to ask.
Good-bye, and thanks. And . . . you're a lovely
kid."

VI

All the way home in the taxi I didn't think,
I just laid back in the seat, and closed my eyes.
What had I done? Had I gone and fell in love?
And fallen hard? For a married man, with kids,
And one that was so far out of my class?
Well, if I had, what did it matter, anyway?
I could still smell that warm tobacco-smell
Of his rough coat, and feel his arms around me.

Ma was just terrible. It was half-past six,
And the comp'ny was there already, sittin' around.
She was sweet as honey in front of them, of course,

But in the pantry, dishin' potato salad,
She gave me the biggest bawlin'-out! Oh, Lord!
It must of made her twice as mad, because
I didn't answer back. I just kept smilin',
Thinkin' about the happy afternoon.

So I got through the evenin', bein' nice
To all those hens and fools. And when they left,
I let Ma rave for an hour and a half,
Without a word, about what a terrible daughter
I was, that never thought of anybody
Except myself. Oh, well, what is the use?
When you get nothin' but that, day after day
Five years, you miss your Pa, and understand
Just why he drank so much when he was alive,
And didn't seem to care when the pneumonia
Hit him, but just gave in, and died. Poor Pa!

The spell was still around me, goin' to sleep,
And I kept dreamin' about that Mr. Kirby.
But yesterday mornin', when I first woke up,
It was all changed. I just felt miserable.
Because I couldn't get him out of my mind,
But what could ever come of it? Why, nothin'.
He'd go away—his boat was sailin' Thursday,
He was in Philly now, would come back Wednesday,
And what would happen if I went somewhere

To dance, before he left? For him, I was
A cute girl, maybe,—sure, but that was all.
And so he'd go on down there to Bermuda,
Swept by warm breezes, with the birds and flowers,
And I'd go down to the office every day,
And pound the Remington, and then back home
To rotten Brooklyn . . . and think about his face.

All day at the office I kept thinkin' about it.
And by the time I crawled into the sheets,
I had it all doped out. The thing was finished.
Wednesday, he'd be there. Well, I wouldn't be.
I couldn't stand to see him, ever again.
I'd make out I was sick, and stay away
Until he sailed. . . . And then, after a week,
Or anyway, after a while, I could forget
That afternoon, and how he looked, and how
It felt to have him kiss me. That was that.
A girl like me can't play with fire that way.
And so, I got it all settled and finished,
And went to the office this mornin', calm, and cured.

VII

The first thing when I sat down at the desk,
What do I see but a letter. I read it, quick,

And all day long it's been like I had fever.
I couldn't think, I couldn't hardly eat.
I'm tryin' so hard to figure out what's right,
And make my heart shut up. . . . Here is the letter:
"My dearest Lucy:
Yes, that's what you are,
The dearest little girl in all the world.
I can't apologize enough for exposing you
To that fool's insults. Well, but let's forget them.
Hereafter, you can trust me thoroughly;
I'm nothing if not thorough. Here's a plan:
"I'm going to take you with me to Bermuda.
I need a private secretary. So
I asked old Gannet if he would loan you to me
While I'm down there. He was delighted, and said so.
I also said my sister's going along.
And so she is. I didn't say that she
Is quite an invalid, and stays in bed
All day as well as night. And we won't see her—
At least you won't. Your salary will be
Any sum you think fair. That lies with you.
There will be correspondence, quite a lot.
And cable-grams, and numerous details,
Enough to keep you busy an hour a day.

"But it's the glorious times we're going to have,
In the warm sunshine, bathing in the surf,
Going to dances at the big hotels,
Playing, just playing. Won't it be wonderful?

"I've cabled for a splendid room for you,
Not far from mine. You shall have every comfort.
And let me say, you'll have a charge account
At all the shops down there. I understand
You can get beautiful things, for evening wear
And clothes, too. Anything else you wish
Remember, all you have to do is ask.

"You can't say no, Lucy, you darling kid.
You see how well I've managed it for you.
Old Gannet's O. K. ought to fix it up
At home. I'm sure it will. Didn't you say
Your mother thinks the sun rises and sets
In Gannet? And you know my reputation—
'Old Stick-in-the-mud.' So make your plans at once,
And meet me at the dock, pier 42,
Thursday, at noon. And don't dare to be late.

"In haste, and looking forward to a romp
That will make up for all the years you've longed

To travel, you sweet kid, believe me, ever
Your friend

LLEWELLYN KIRBY."

Isn't it like a beautiful fairy-tale?
I just told Ma, and, because of Old Gannet
Givin' it his O. K., she thinks it's fine,
Even if she does say that she doesn't see
Why she can't go along. . . . Of course, she
can't,
And I can see she won't make any trouble.

To get away from all this slush and snow,
And dirty Brooklyn houses, and the office,
Into—where is that folder?—"into lands
Where azure skies hang above emerald hills."
Oh, beautiful!

But how would it end up?
"I've cabled for a splendid room for you—
Not far from mine"—Oh, but those warm, sweet
nights,
Under the stars—and his hair, over his temples,
All grey, and so romantic—and the way
That kiss still burns. . . . And still, I know, I
know
That me or things will never be the same
Again. Six weeks of livin' in heaven, and then—

Listen to the wind, howlin' against the pane! . . .
"Forty-eight Hours From June." . . .

What do I care
What happens afterward? I only have
One life. . . . I'm goin' to live! . . . Where is
my pen?
Flowers, and birds, and grass. . . .

VIII

"Dear Mr. Kirby, . . ."

The Silences

There was the times that I would be with you
When both of us would be funny and gay,
And everything would look all bright and new,
And we would sing, and joke, and laugh, and play.

There was the times that only touchin' hands
Would make us tremble. And it would just seem
Like we was goin' crazy, wantin' each other,
And love would be a wild, sweet, flamin' dream.

But what I remember was most beautiful,
Was sittin' close together, in the gloom,
And not a word. Like when it's quiet, in church,
And you think God is comin' in the room. . . .

Lost Spring

Spring never came at all.
  Cold rain every day.
What good did it do to cry?
  What good did it do to pray?
No winds full of flower smells,
  Or nights with a warm round moon—
Not one of the things we loved—
  Snow!—When it almost was June!

We wanted the Spring so much!
  We hoped and waited so long!
Tryin' to fight our troubles,
  And everything goin' wrong;
But even when they was hardest,
  And it seemed like our nerves would crack,
We'd say, "But Spring can save us—
  In Spring it'll all come back!"

But Spring never came at all.
  Nothin' but clouds and cold

And then the blazin' summer.
  And I can't ever find the old
Shine that would be in your eyes;
  And they's only a sort of a pain
Instead of the dreams I had. . . .
  Will it ever be Spring again?

Afternoon Tea

(*A Polyphonic Juvenility*)

You curve, white against the green cushions, on the window-seat. I sit opposite you, uncomfortably neat. April breaks in waves through the wide-open windows. You chirp of this and that, while the maid, very staid, moves noiseless, like a cat, with the tea. On that tree buds are pouting, and I can feel the sap shooting in its tendrils. . . .

And "Don't you think Town Topics is just dreadful?" you say. . . . And it will soon be May. . . .

The sun is in the west, pouring gold upon the curve of your breast, so that a lump is in my throat. A pagan note sings in my ears. A boat faintly gleams on the horizon, bound—who knows?—for Troy or Colchis, full of strong youths with long yellow hair. The smoothness of your ankle stabs me like a knife. Oh, Helen,

and Paris, and the long, bitter strife for one devastating passion! . . .

"I really think tight skirts will be the fashion. . . ."

An old, wistful earth-tang pervades the air, mingles with the faint, swooning perfume of your hair, tugs at me, as it were the odor of some forgotten Hesperidean flower. I see poppies rippling, and a myriad exotic blossoms that breathed in an hour when Hellas was young.

And you and I have flung away the shackles of the years. There is no tea, nor whirring wheels of automobiles, nor owl-eyed fears— We are free! We are free!

The petals crush beneath our dancing feet. Io!

A hundred nymphs and satyrs, wheeling, leaping in a mad, glad riot of the Spring. Sing!

Io!

I am drunk with April and your lithe whiteness! Oh, shimmering brightness! Strain lips against lips, body against body! Cling! . . .

"Why, you haven't touched your tea," you chirp to me. "My dear, what a queer look. . . . You know, I've read the sweetest book. . . ."

Fantasy

Stars!—
If they could have a smell like flowers—
White, soft, sparklin',
So beautiful they hurt you—
Not proud and grand,
Just little and friendly—
Crowds and crowds of friends—

Night time by the river,
Stars all up above us,
Stars every side of us,
Like the whole Milky Way
Fell down around us—

Stars—

If they could have a smell like flowers—

Honeysuckle!

Perhaps

Perhaps it were far better not to know
Beauty. Perhaps one should not ever see
The moonlight shedding silver on a tree;
Or apple-bloom. Perhaps one should not go
Where Spring may thrust her little swords of green
Through strongest armor; nor smell birchen leaves
Smould'ring to incense; nor receive the keen
Flicks of a breeze that stirs the new-bound sheaves.

Perhaps one should but guess how two may stand
Merging their spirits by the clasp of hand
In hand, while in their inmost hearts they hear
A far-off swooning music drawing near. . . .

Perhaps he is more fortunate, who goes
Dreaming and wondering, and never knows.

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